ALBERTA
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES
ANNUAL REPORT 1989-90

Baby in Chair, acrylic on canvas, by **Chris Saruk-Reid,** an Edmonton artist born in Lamont, Alberta and educated at the University of Alberta and the School of Art Institute in Chicago. She has exhibited locally and her work is in several private collections. The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Isuues is pleased to have acquired this work for its permanent collection.

ALBERTA
ADVISORY
COUNCIL
ON
WOMEN'S
ISSUES

June 1990

The Honourable Elaine McCoy
Minister Responsible for Women's Issues
103 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Ms McCoy:

I am pleased to submit the annual report of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues for the fiscal year 1989-90.

Respectfully submitted.

Elva Mertick
Chairperson

ELVA MERTICK
CHAIRPERSON

LAURIE BLAKEMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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About the Council

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues was established by Bill 19, an Act of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, in November 1986. The Council reports to the Legislative Assembly through the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, the Honourable Elaine McCoy.

The Council's purpose is, "to advise and report to the Alberta government through the Minister on matters relating to the opportunity for full and equal participation of Alberta women in the life of the province by

a) identifying specific matters and issues relating to women that may be addressed by the government,

b) making recommendations to the government with respect to any issues relating to women,

c) consulting with and providing information to the public, and

d) carrying out any other activities that the Minister considers appropriate."

The Council is made up of fourteen members and a part-time Chairperson all appointed by Executive Committee. The members represent Alberta women of various geographic, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Chairperson's Report

The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues has undergone a number of changes since its inception in 1986 and this past year has been no exception. I'm convinced that these changes allow the Council to work even more effectively for all Alberta women.

The Council now has a part-time Chairperson and a full-time Executive Director. I accepted the appointment as Chairperson in April, 1989 and Laurie Blakeman filled the newly created position of Executive Director in July. The Council's staff report to the Executive Director and she is responsible for all administrative matters, which has allowed me to spend more time focussing on the mandate of, and directing the Council.

The Council was, in effect, reborn with the appointment of eight new members in July. Members appointed were Donna Graham, Lauraine Howatt, Reva Joshee, Geraldine Many Fingers, Edna McHutchion, Ann Tweddle, Amal Umar and Leona Walsh. Three new appointees joined us in March, Amanda Bailey, Pat Lambert and Derryn Yeomans to bring the Council to within one member of its full strength.

The Council's new visual identity is part of our rebirth and regeneration. It depicts a Renaissance woman who is looking forward, bringing the history and traditions of women of the past to bear on the issues and concerns of women today and in future. Our colours too were chosen for their symbolic qualities, both green and purple are organic colours, found in nature. Purple is also a traditional colour of power for women as historically, women who wore purple were aristocrats and therefore had the right to speak out. We believe this is an integral part of our mandate in representing the concerns of all Alberta women to the provincial government.

We have worked very hard to ensure that individual members are a part of the women's community so that we can articulate to government the issues and changes that are required to improve the quality of life for Alberta women. Such issues as economic equality, social equality and educational equality are all areas of concern for the Council. And we have had successes. We have been able to effect changes in the maintenance enforcement program, we have made submissions on foreign credentials and daycare and we are encouraged that action is being taken on the Council's suggestions about the status of midwifery in Alberta.

The Council was able to achieve consensus on the difficult area of abortion. Because Council members are from varied backgrounds and beliefs, we could not assume that there would be a common, unanimous position. However, the Council felt strongly that abortion should not be a criminal offence and we were able to articulate that position to the Federal Parliamentary Committee and to the Alberta community at large. The Council is committed to ensuring that women have equal access to whatever forms of medical care and services they choose to acquire or require and our consensus against the recriminalization of abortion is an expansion of that position.

It is important that the Council work on issues for Alberta women today but we must also bear in mind that we are creating a heritage for our daughters and granddaughters. Indeed this may be almost more important than the work we are doing right now. We must not close the doors on any options for us and for them.

As women we reacted with shock and horror to the tragic deaths of fourteen young women in Montreal late in 1989. The loss of those young women is a loss to all of us and the violent way in which they died is again a horrible reminder of how often women everywhere live with and suffer violence. Women continue to be victimized by violence and as a council we are committed to taking what steps we can to ensure that Alberta becomes a safer place for women.

The Council has a continuing concern about the way women are treated within the judicial system. We are concerned that women charged with minor criminal offences are being given sentences that only continue the cycle of

poverty in which they are already trapped and that domestic violence is still not a factor considered in sentencing by the court system. We want to encourage the judiciary to become more familiar with women's issues in order that judgements and sentencing can more accurately reflect the best interest of women, their families and the community at large. Too often sentencing, the judgements and supportive services do not reflect any knowledge of women's issues.

The Council was pleased to fulfill its mandate in another way, by supporting women's groups who believed they were not adequately represented at the Lieutenant Governor's Conference on the Family, to voice their concerns. In this way women's groups and the Council were able to advise the government of our strong conviction that the interpretation of families in all future policy decisions had to be inclusive of all types of families, both traditional and non-traditional. We have also been pleased to assist women's groups in Alberta by providing our extensive mailing list to them so they are able to contact and communicate with the larger women's community in the province.

We have learned first hand from the Council and from our respective communities that the issues we deal with are not restricted to specific cultural boundaries. All issues are cultural issues and we must continue to approach them in a multicultural fashion so we can serve the interests of all women effectively.

For the future the Council is looking to a long term involvement in employment equity as we believe first and foremost it is necessary to ensure economic parity for women. We are also going to address mediation, the unified family court proposal, educational opportunities for women, substance abuse and violence against women with a view to trying to change attitudes of both society and individuals. It is a challenging agenda; however, it is one which the Council is willing and able to carry out.

Members

Members of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues during the 1989-90 fiscal year were the following:

Lori G. Andreachuk

Lori Andreachuk was born in Lethbridge, Alberta and attended the University of Lethbridge, achieving a Bachelor of Arts in Economics Honours Degree. She graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Laws Degree in June of 1977 and articled with a Lethbridge firm. She was admitted to the Alberta Bar in June of 1978 and has practised in Lethbridge and elsewhere in Alberta for twelve years, specializing in matrimonial law, civil litigation, family mediation and divorce. She was the recipient of the Lieutenant-Governor's Scholarship and the Chief Justice Louis Sherman Turcotte Scholarship. She has sat on the Unemployment Insurance Board of Referees since 1980 and was a founding member of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. Lori has lectured at Lethbridge Community College, the University of Lethbridge, and the Alberta Bar Association and Canadian Bar Association on Family Law.

L. Amanda Bailey

L. Amanda Bailey was born, raised and educated in Edmonton, graduating from Jasper Place Composite High with academic, athletic and general achievement honours. She obtained her Bachelor of Science from the University of Alberta and four years later received a medical degree from the same institution. In 1981, she graduated as a Doctor of Dental Surgery with distinction from the University of Alberta and won the Alberta Dental Association Gold Medal. Amanda has worked as a part-time instructor at the University of Alberta Faculty of Dentistry, and as an associate general dentist and in 1988 she opened her own practice in Edmonton. She belongs to several community and professional associations including the Alberta Dental Association, the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, Planned Parenthood and Change for Children, an organization for Third World Development. In addition, Amanda is an avid participant in a wide variety of athletic activities.

Donna Graham

Donna Graham was born in Calgary, Alberta and was raised on a farm in the Arrowwood district. She is an active partner in a mixed farm operation and helped promote a food production project which encouraged farmers to take their products and market them. Donna was appointed to the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues in 1989. She is Chair of the Alberta Farm Womens' Network 1990, a member of the Rural Community Projects Advisory Committee Extension Service, Olds College. Donna is also past-director of the Western Barley Growers' Association and past president of the Alberta Women in Support of Agriculture.

Brigit Hawkins

Brigit Hawkins was born and raised in Denmark and emigrated with her parents to the Camrose area. During her 30 year working career she has been a court administrator and liaison officer and has worked in radio in personnel, management and public relations. Brigit is an artist and her work is found in collections in Europe, the United States and Canada. She has been, and is involved extensively in community affairs. She was president of the Chamber of Commerce at Alberta Beach and has been involved with Meals on Wheels, teen groups and senior citizens. Brigit is on the Board of Directors of the Multicultural Heritage Society and Multicultural Centre at Stony Plain. She also owns and operates a custom art framing company. Brigit serves as vice-chair and is one of the original appointees to the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues.

Lauraine P. Howatt

Lauraine grew up on a farm in Northwestern Alberta where everyone worked together, irrespective of sex. At a very young age, she learned that the real world allowed women some types of work and men others. As a young widow, she was rudely introduced to the general societal attitude towards a woman, second class status. Women's issues became her issues. Since that time Lauraine has

become involved with women's groups, locally, provincially and nationally. Her personal crusade is economic parity for women. She believes that when women's worth is recognized and accepted, the two class system will erode and with it the problems it has imposed upon women. Lauraine owns and operates an insurance brokerage firm in Grande Prairie.

Reva Joshee

Reva Joshee brings years of experience in such areas as multiculturalism, minority issues and women's rights. From 1984 to 1988, Reva worked with the Secretary of State as a Social Development Officer, mostly in multiculturalism and institutional change. Since late 1988, she's been on loan from the Secretary of State to help develop an Institute of Gender Research at the University of Calgary. Reva was born in Ambo, Ethiopia but grew up in Edmonton. She has a masters degree in literary translation and is a life member of the Hindu Society of Alberta. She is involved with Big Sisters and women's shelters.

Patricia Lambert

Patricia Lambert is originally from England and relocated to Fort McMurray in 1969. She is currently Executive Director of The Keyano College Foundation which was established to raise funds needed for the College's growth and development. Previously, as Keyano College's Director of Student Housing, she dealt with many of the social and economic issues facing students, including women. A member of the Business and Professional Women's Club, she also has been involved with the local YMCA and various recreational committees and associations.

Geraldine Many Fingers

Geraldine Many Fingers began her own fashion designing company in 1982. She studied business administration at Lethbridge Community College and was one of the first native loan officers with a chartered bank in Alberta. Gerri also served as the Blood Tribe's economic developer, a position she held for 19 years. She helped develop Kainai Industries, a modular housing industry and played a key role in building a shopping centre for the band and in assisting native entrepreneurs to get their businesses off the ground. Gerri served on the Alberta Human Rights Commission between 1982 and 1986 and is now coordinator of the Indian News Society, which produces a weekly newspaper, radio, television and video programs.

Edna McHutchion

Edna McHutchion of Calgary is assistant professor and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary. She holds a PhD in Educational Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Edna is currently a member of a variety of nursing and community associations, has served as a staff nurse in several settings and was a founding member of the Hospice Calgary Society and the Hospice Care Edmonton Society. She has done extensive consulting work in the areas of palliative care and bereavement counselling, and is active in conducting research, presenting workshops, and writing papers and articles. Much of her work focuses on community based delivery of health care services.

Elva Mertick

Elva Mertick is president of a Calgary agency which provides therapy services. She is a registered social worker who completed her formal education at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. Elva has been a sessional instructor at Mount Royal College, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge in the faculties of social work and nursing. She has a wide range of experience in program development, youth and women's issues, staff training and stress management. She is recognized throughout Canada as an authority on grief/loss counselling. She has received international recognition and distinctions including: Community Leaders of America 1986; International Who's Who in Medicine 1986; International Who's Who in Business and Professional Women 1988 and 1990.

Ann Tweddle

Ann Tweddle was born in Edmonton, and is the mother of three grown children. She has been active in volunteerism and is currently a member of the Community Advisory Board of the Junior League of Edmonton and is involved with the United Way of Edmonton and the Big Sister Society. Ann is a former Executive Director of the Association of Human Services in Alberta. She has served as a public representative on the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses Council and in several capacities with the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Amal Umar

Amal Umar of Calgary has experience as a community programmer and facilitator, and has developed, planned, and implemented programs for immigrant women. She was also a community program coordinator in Toronto for several years where she was an instructor in a life skills program for immigrant women. Amal holds a masters degree in political science and has been a board member of the Calgary Immigrant Women Centre and the Alberta and Northwest Territories Network for Immigrant women, as well as Vice-President of the Immigrant Women National Follow-up Committee. Amal is currently with the federal Secretary of State Department as a Social Development Officer.

Leona Walsh

Leona Walsh was born and raised in Youngstown, Alberta. After raising a family she is now pursuing a wide variety of interests and hobbies including window and sign painting, boarding and grooming dogs, and as a beauty consultant for a cosmetics firm. Leona also owns three quarter horses which earn their keep assisting Leona in her work as a cow puncher for several area ranchers and in penning cattle at the local auction mart. Leona has been a member of the Alberta Women's Institute for several years. For the past several years she has also filled the position of secretary/treasurer for the Loyalist Hall Association.

Derryn Yeomans

Derryn is a counsellor and human services consultant in private practice. She instructs personal development courses privately and through Red Deer Community College. Derryn is a psychological assistant registered with the Psychologists Association of Alberta. She completed her B.S.W. in June 1990 and will continue her studies toward an M.S.W. at the University of Calgary. Derryn has served on the past executive of the Writer's Guild of Alberta and has published short stories, poetry and non-fiction. She is currently a member of Red Deer Businesswomen Network, Red Deer Preventive Child Welfare Committee, Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society and Alberta Association of Social Workers (Area Coordinator). She also served as a board member of the Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter and as Past President of Red Deer Junior Achievement.

Recommendations

During the 1989-90 fiscal year the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues presented a number of recommendations to the Government of Alberta dealing with abortion and midwifery.

Abortion

Excerpt from the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues' submission to the Federal Parliamentary Committee on abortion December 1989.

"Abortion is a matter of health, and as such, it must be viewed in the same way as are other matters of reproductive health. The individual right and the ability to choose, if, when and where to have children represents in a most fundamental way the full and equal participation of women in society. Any attempt to "regulate" abortion by means of criminal law is misplaced and ill-founded.

The consequences of criminalizing abortion will be far-reaching and devastating. The well-being of women, the medical profession and Canadian society will all be at risk if Bill C-43 is enacted.

The position of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues remains that abortion is a health issue. Abortion, like all matters of reproductive health, must be considered to be part of health issues in general. Most importantly, we believe that a woman has the right to determine what constitutes the best medical treatment for herself. Abortion cannot and should not be isolated from any other medical procedure. Abortion is a matter of health and not a matter of criminal law. The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues does not accept the use of legislation, particularly the criminal law, as a means of government regulation of women's reproductive health."

Text of the resolution passed by the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues October, 1989.

Whereas

- the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Section 251 (abortion) of the Criminal Code on January 28, 1988;
- abortion has been a legal medical procedure since this decision;
- women are protected from unqualified medical practitioners by the Criminal Code and no additional laws are required;
- there has been no reported increase in the total number of abortions performed in Canada since decriminalization and this is consistent with findings from other countries;

it is the position of the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues that abortion should not be recriminalized through legislation.

Midwifery

Recommendations for Change of Status:

Whereas:

- reproductive choice entails a woman's decision whether to give birth, her choice of where and how to give birth and the choice of professional caregiver during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, and

Whereas:

- there has been increasing public interest in establishing midwifery as a recognized part of the health care system both nationally and at the provincial level, and

Whereas:

- midwives currently are not licensed in Alberta

Be it resolved that

1. The Province of Alberta: 1) enact legislation to license midwives and to endorse the midwife as an independent practitioner whose scope of practice is consistent with the definition accepted by the World Health Organization, the International Confederation of Midwives and the International Federation of Gynecologists and Obstetricians namely

(The midwife) must be able to give the necessary supervision, care and advice to women during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period, to conduct deliveries on her own responsibility and to care for the newborn and the mother. This care includes preventative measures, the detection of abnormal conditions in mother and child, the procurement of medical assistance and the execution of emergency measures in the absence of medical help. She has an important task in health counselling and education, not only for the patients but also within the family and community. The work should involve antenatal education and preparation for parenthood, and extends to certain areas of gynecology, family planning and child care.

2. Licensed midwives meet requirements for safe and effective midwifery practice under a governing body which would regulate qualifications, standards of practice and professional conduct.

3. Midwifery services be funded by the Provincial Government in order to ensure full integration of midwifery into the health care system.

The guiding principles for this proposed change as suggested by the Task Force on the Implementation in Ontario were used to support Council's decision. The six principles, as paraphrased from the Task Force Executive Summary, are:

1. Public Protection

2. Responsiveness to Social Change

3. Autonomy — Midwives are not to be seen as physicians' assistants or expanded role nurses.

4. Integration into the overall system of health care in a cooperative relationship with other health care professionals.

5. Credibility — No woman should be compelled to be cared for by a midwife instead of a physician however clarity, legislation and standards around the role of the midwife are required.

6. Government support is essential. It is acknowledged that start-up costs would be an increased financial burden but long-term savings would partially compensate for the initial cost.

Council Activities

During the 1989-90 fiscal year the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues participated in meetings, conferences, banquets and special events. Highlights of activities during the year include the following:

✔ As part of continued monitoring of the province's Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP), the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues asked Alberta women for information about their experiences with MEP. During the previous year, the Council had presented seven recommendations for action about MEP to the Alberta Government. Subsequent discussions with MEP officials indicated that two of the Council's recommendations had been partially implemented by the program. As a result of the Council's initiative, a direct deposit system for cheques to the recipient spouse was established. Cheques were and are held for ten days in order to ensure necessary funds are available; and previously these cheques were then mailed to recipient spouses leading to an additional five to seven day delay. The direct deposit system has eliminated the latter delay. A second Council recommendation, a telephone information line, allows persons registered with the program to obtain information about their files through a confidential personal identification number. Prior to the introduction of the personal identification number, information on files was only available upon receipt of a written request.

✔ The 80th Anniversary of International Women's Day, March 8th, was celebrated by an Open House held in the Council's Edmonton office. More than one hundred people attended, including the Hon. Elaine McCoy, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

✔ The Alberta Advisory Council expressed its concern about the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord and added its voice to those of numerous women's organizations from across Canada and Alberta who made submissions and presented briefs to both the Federal and Provincial governments. The Council expressed its concern about the possible implications for women's constitutional and equality rights as they are presently guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In particular, the Council pointed out the lack of certainty in Section 7 of the Accord, which deals with shared-cost programs, and which represents a potential threat to women who constitute a large percentage of the beneficiaries of those programs.

✔ The Council expressed its concern to the Minister of Family and Social Services about the lack of support services for unwed mothers and lent its support in priniciple to the community proposal for a community committee chaired by a representative of the Calgary Catholic Family Service.

✔ The Advisory Council issued a news release in September to commemorate the Sixtieth Anniversary Celebrations of the Persons Case. The Council and staff were involved in the preliminary planning of several events held in Edmonton to honour these women who played a pivotal role in Canadian women's history.

✔ The Council and the Provincial Senior Citizens Advisory Council co-sponsored two forums on Women and Aging in October, in Edmonton and Lethbridge. The conference was chaired by the Hon. Elaine McCoy, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and Council Chairperson Elva Mertick was keynote speaker. Council members Lori Andreachuk and Brigit Hawkins both participated in panel discussions as did Margaret Cooke, a researcher with the Council.

✔ The Council's Social Issues Committee and Chairperson Elva Mertick wrote to the Premier expressing their grave concern about such matters as limited funding for women's organizations and funding of women's groups resting solely with the Women's Secretariat. The Social Issues Committee pointed out that funding and access to funding would be much more accessible for all women if funding was administered by several government departments, including agriculture.

✔ The Advisory Council is very interested in women's health issues. During the year, several Council members met with the planning

committee of the proposed "Centre for Women" in Edmonton and expressed their support for this type of women's health centre to the Government of Alberta.

✔ The Government of Alberta responded to a 1988 recommendation from the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues by establishing the Task Force on the Recognition of Foreign Credentials. In March 1990, the Advisory Council submitted a report to the Task Force stating its firm commitment to the development and establishment of appropriate standards in Alberta for the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. The Council believes there is an urgent need for the development of a thoughtful and long-term plan for the future of the workplace and the worker in the economic life of Alberta. Trends in the work force indicate that there will be a significant shortage of skilled workers within the next decade. In planning for the coming years, the Council encouraged the Task Force to recommend that the Province search for ways to meet this need. In its submission, the Council stated, "The Province of Alberta cannot afford to waste the resources which educated, skilled and motivated immigrants and refugees have brought with them. In competing for this valuable labour force, Alberta must be concerned to establish standards which are at the very least compatible with those in other parts of the country. Furthermore, as part of its stated commitment to national multiculturalism policy, the Government of Alberta is obliged to find ways to recognize and reward the contributions and benefits, real and potential, which immigrants bring to this province. Immigrants and refugees, as individuals and as communities, need to be provided with opportunities which will allow them to participate at all levels of public and private life as equal partners in social, economic and political activities of this province."

Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues

Financial Statement

April 1, 1989 to March 31, 1990

Salaries and Benefits	$ 92,736
Travel	66,891
Honoraria and Contract Fees	57,539
Rental of Equipment	5,710
Postage/Communications	6,087
Materials and Supplies	17,864
Other Operating Expenses	2,879
Purchase of Fixed Assets	25,641
Total Expenditures	$275,347

For additional copies of this report or for further information on the Council's discussion papers, materials or activities contact

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